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# **STUDENT LEADERSHIP, CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND PERSONAL SUCCESS PROFILES**

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## ***Abstract***

*The main goal of this empirical research was to define those predominant leadership characteristics and behaviours found among all four generations of undergraduates at RIT Croatia's Dubrovnik campus. The basic research question was: What is the empirical basis for classifying students into homogeneous groups? The first part of the questionnaire was based on The Big Five Model of Personality characteristics, but the principal research method was the leadership characteristics, career development, and personal success questionnaire created by applying inductive research methodologies to 100 Croatian leaders' interviews. In order to answer the research question, four cluster analyses were conducted. The null hypothesis that there is not a correlation between leadership characteristics among an undergraduate population and demographic variables (number of siblings, place of growing up - city, small place, and large city) was accepted. Based on The Big Five Model of Personality the first cluster analysis generated three homogenous groups of students. The basis for the second cluster analysis was leadership characteristics of RIT Croatia students. The third cluster analysis depended on what represents confirmation of personal success. The*

*final, fourth, cluster analysis was based on the subjective dimension of career development expectation. All four cluster analyses produced three distinct clusters.*

***Keywords: leadership characteristics, student development, student leadership profile, career development, personal success***

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Research, from neither a theoretic nor practical approach, into desirable student leadership characteristics pertaining to the development of future leaders that will impact economic performance has yet to be undertaken. The original interest and idea behind such research is to determine leadership characteristics that could be encouraged and developed during the education process in order to increase the number of future leaders.

The purpose of this paper is to detect and analyse characteristics and qualities which represent RIT Croatia's Dubrovnik campus undergraduate students' personalities and to detect leadership characteristics which differentiate four generations of students freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors, suggesting an evolution of student personalities. The main goal of this empirical research was to define those predominant leadership characteristics and behaviours found among all four generations of undergraduates at RIT Croatia's Dubrovnik campus. The basic research question was: What is the empirical basis for classifying students into homogeneous groups?

It is no surprise that current organizations are fighting to determine the magic formula for how to succeed in the long run. The business environment is more competitive than ever. The rate of change is causing us to discard any unnecessary behaviours or characteristics while focusing only on those competencies that will bring us long term success. Companies want to get the best from their workforce and, if possible, from the moment they get hired.

One particular type of leaders in recent times seems to achieve greater motivation and engagement among the workforce, focusing on transformative strength of the organization and relationship building among the employees of an organization (Bass and Riggio, 2006). Transformational Leaders are found to be inspirational and highly effective when it comes to increased motivation and positive outcomes (Bass and Riggio, 2006).

Transformational leaders are creative, energetic, team players. At the very core of the transformational leadership model one can find consciousness – of self and of others. The change towards this type of leadership has to start at the individual level and it should continue to interpersonal relationships and finally to the organization as a whole (Hacker & Roberts, 2003).

Research on transformational leadership can be linked with Big Five personality characteristics (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience) as important predecessors of this particular type of leadership (Lee, 2012).

Big Five personality characteristics have been cross-culturally validated and there is a vast body of research using this model to explore the relationship between personality and leadership (McCrae, Costa, 1987).

The model relies on exploring the five personality traits: extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience. Extraversion in this context means “sociable, gregarious, assertive, talkative, and active”, and agreeableness is being “courteous, trusting, forgiving, and soft-hearted”. Conscientiousness refers to “responsible, organized, planful and thorough” while openness to experience describes an individual as “imaginative, curious, original and artistically sensitive”. Neuroticism has been described as having “anxious, depressed, emotional, insecure” tendencies (Barrick, Mount, 1991).

Due to the popularity of personality tests, this study examined the relationship between various leadership characteristics (as projected through the Big Five as a model) and the student population at a college level higher education institution. This research focused on discovering leadership characteristics and existence of patterns and clusters among a diverse student population by applying inductive research methodology from *100 Croatian Leaders* (Samardžija, 2013).

As Baccei (2015) states in his dissertation work, one of the main goals of colleges and universities today is to strive to develop future leaders through careful design of curricular and extra-curricular activities. The college administrators have to be aware of the importance of deliberately choosing as many leadership opportunities as possible so that students can develop in the right direction (Baccei, 2015).

The case in this study can be taken as an example of a higher education institution that tries to do the same: to educate future managers with the right leadership competencies that will make them valuable future employees. In the creation of the curriculum, RIT Croatia is guided by identification of competencies first followed by working on the list of classes to offer second (R.I.T. Greatness Through Difference, 2016). The results of this paper may be used to refine the competencies identified earlier by RIT Croatia administrators.

What types of leaders are being educated at RIT Croatia? Is there a particular type that would be more “suitable” in a given social and cultural environment? A study conducted between Swedish and Croatian leadership styles revealed that there are differences in perception of desirable leadership skills. While Croatian participants rated self-confidence, dominance and fluency of speech as the top three characteristics, Swedish participants reported charisma,

communication and team building as the crucial skills (Kostić-Bobanović and Bobanović, 2013).

Juras (2010) concluded that Croatian managers demonstrated the development of consciousness related to the growing importance of leadership for the success of Croatian business. For Croatia, as a country still in transition, this is an important stage of creating the right opportunities for students to learn about appropriate traits and skills and their ability to match them with the appropriate leadership style.

The personality approach to leadership is only one approach and it may be a limited one. However, this research contributes to the previous body of studies that explored the relationship between traits and leadership development. Andersen (2005) states that previous work has found positive correlations but these correlations were weak.

In leadership development guidebook, Seemiller (2013) clearly makes a case that any institution of higher learning that wants to adequately prepare students for successful future careers has to understand the competencies that are a must for achieving effectiveness at work. Thus, students must be familiarized with the process and language of competencies before entering the workforce.

After providing the preceding brief literature review associated with leadership styles and personality traits, the paper will first continue with a description of the methodology employed to understand students' leadership qualities and personality traits. Following this, results of the study's survey and an associated discussion will occur. Finally, concluding remarks are presented.

## 2. METHODS

This paper would like to produce research outcomes that are useful in education and that will later have a practical impact on real-world organizations. In particular, this paper was interested in characteristics that RIT Croatia students value the most. The basic research question was: What is the empirical basis for classifying students into homogeneous groups? In order to answer the research question, four cluster analyses were conducted:

1. Cluster analysis of students according to The Big Five Model of Personality
2. RIT Croatia Leadership characteristics cluster analysis
3. Cluster analysis of confirmation of personal success
4. Career development cluster analysis

Associated with this research is the null hypothesis: There is not a correlation between leadership characteristics among an undergraduate population and two demographic variables: number of siblings and place of growing up (city, small place, and large city).

**Participants:** There were 134 participants, students from RIT Croatia's Dubrovnik campus, in total recruited through a combination of face to face distribution of questionnaires and an online distribution of the same questionnaire via Google form. Out of the 134 completed questionnaires, 127 questionnaires were valid: 29 Freshmen (22,8%), 27 Sophomores (21,3%), 37 Juniors (29,1%) and 34 Senior students (26,8%). Gender distribution among participants was almost equal: 62 (48,8%) female and 65 (51,2%) male.

**Materials:** The questionnaire consists of 18 different type of questions helping one better understand leadership characteristics, but also obtaining a greater awareness of characteristics that would make students excel in their future careers as leaders. The first part of the questionnaire was based on The Big Five Model of Personality (Cronbach's Alpha  $\alpha = .69$ ), but the principal research method was a leadership questionnaire that consists of 42 traits created by professor Samardžija using inductive research methodology applied to 100 Croatian leaders' interviews (Samardžija, 2013) (Cronbach's Alpha  $\alpha = .93$ ). The questionnaire contained a list of characteristics in semantic differential form. The participants were asked to circle a number from 1-7 on a Likert scale that corresponds to their level of identification with the anchors' stated characteristic (personality trait). Further questions investigated student attitudes about important components for career development, opinions about success, and individual claims based on confirmation of personal success. The remaining questions in the questionnaire were used to create demographic profiles of students.

**Procedure:** Using descriptive adjective pairings and a 7-point Likert scale, students first self-reported aspects of their personalities based on twenty-five traits associated with the Big Five Model of Personality which categorizes traits into five dimensions of Extraversion, Agreeableness, Openness, Conscientiousness, and Neuroticism (Lussier and Achua, 2001). The principal research method was the leadership characteristics, career development, and personal success questionnaire created by applying inductive research methodologies to 100 Croatian leaders' interviews (Samardžija, 2013). Participants were instructed to self-report their standing in regards to 42 descriptive adjective pairings of personal leadership characteristics, as well as their attitude towards career development, and confirmation of their personal success.

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Based on The Big Five Model of Personality the first cluster analysis generated three homogenous groups of students. The basis for the second cluster analysis was leadership characteristics of RIT Croatia students. The third cluster analysis depended on what represents confirmation of personal success. The final, fourth, cluster analysis was based on the subjective dimension of career

development expectation. All four cluster analyses produced three distinct clusters.

### 3.1. Cluster Analysis of Students According to the Big Five Model of Personality

Based on The Big Five Model of Personality, the first cluster analysis generated three homogenous groups of students (Table 1).

Table 1

Cluster analysis of students according to The Big Five Model of Personality

|   |                 | Cluster 1<br>Emotional-<br>extroverts | Cluster 2<br>Self-<br>satisfactionists<br>(Smugs) | Cluster 3<br>Creative<br>perfectionists |
|---|-----------------|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| Gender  |                 | Female                                | Female  | Male                                    |
| Year of college                                 |                 | 2<br>(sophomore)                      | 3<br>(junior)                                     | 3<br>(junior)                           |
| BIG FIVE CHARACTERISTICS<br>Opposing adjectives |                 | Scale 1 2 3 4 5 6 7                   |   |   |
| Down to Earth                                   | Imaginative     | 3                                     | 2   | 4                                       |
| Careless  | Careful         | 4                                     | 3   | 5                                       |
| Soft Hearted                                    | Ruthless        | 3                                     | 6   | 5                                       |
| Rude  | Courteous       | 5                                     | 5   | 5                                       |
| Aloof   | Friendly        | 5                                     | 5   | 6                                       |
| Narrow Interests                                | Broad interests | 4                                     | 6   | 5                                       |
| Disorganized                                    | Well organized  | 5                                     | 6   | 5                                       |
| Forgiving                                       | Vengeful        | 2                                     | 5   | 6                                       |
| Self-pitying                                    | Self-satisfied  | 5                                     | 6   | 6                                       |
| Self-disciplined                                | Weak Willed     | 3                                     | 6   | 5                                       |
| Callous   | Sympathetic     | 5                                     | 3   | 5                                       |
| SUM %   |                 | 23,5%                                 | 12,6%   | 63,9%                                   |

*Source: Authors' research*

The first cluster, the Emotional-extroverts, account for 23.5% of the student sample. This cluster is predominately female and, notably, is the youngest of the sample, and displays the broadest set of liberal ideals, being markedly more forgiving and soft-hearted than the other clusters. Additionally, in their interactions with others, they see themselves as largely courteous, friendly, and sympathetic. In their relationship with the broader environment, they self-report as being down-to-earth and having a number of interests. When pursuing their interests, this cluster is well organized, disciplined and satisfied. In sum, this cluster extends a receptive and engaging hand to the world while purposefully exploring their interests.

The second cluster, the Self-satisfactionists, is the smallest at 12.6%. This cluster is also largely female, but slightly older. Like the Emotional-

extroverts, they are down-to-earth, but, in a stark difference, are much less considerate of others, viewing themselves as ruthless, and somewhat vengeful and callous. In an apparent contradiction, this cluster is, at the same time, friendly and courteous, suggesting that this cluster is accepting of those that they are comfortable with but, at the same time, harsh with those whom they disagree with. When considering what intrigues them, this cluster states that they have broad interests and are well organized in their pursuit of them and are satisfied with their efforts. Overall, this cluster is interested in much of what is around them, exploring various pursuits in a purposeful fashion, and is discerning with whom they interact, being warm with some and dismissive of others.

The third cluster, the Creative-perfectionists, at 63.9%, is the largest cluster. This cluster is largely older and, distinct from the first two clusters, is predominately male. Also unique from the other two clusters, this cluster is less grounded, stating that they are more imaginative and careful, suggesting that they have a day-dreamer aspect to themselves, envisioning new things but at the same time not being aggressive in enacting them. Otherwise, the Creative-perfectionists are much like the Self-satisfactionists, being ruthless, vengeful, and callous while at the same time acting in a friendly and courteous manner. However, this cluster is more sympathetic than the Self-satisfactionists. Not surprisingly, this imaginative cluster does not stay focused, being weak-willed, and having broad interests. Somewhat remarkably, this imaginative and weak-willed cluster is able to, once they have settled on area of interest, act with a certain level of organization.

## **3.2. Leadership Characteristics of RIT Croatia Students**

### **3.2.1. Top Ten RIT Croatia Students Leadership Characteristics**

A descriptive analysis of the sample based on Samardžija's (2013) work was conducted in order to reveal their top ten leadership characteristics (Table 2). A set of 42 characteristics based on inductive research of 100 interviews of Croatian leaders (Samardžija, 2013) were used in the second portion of the questionnaire.



Table 2

## Top ten student leadership characteristics

| Rank | Student leadership characteristics | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|------|------------------------------------|------|----------------|
| 1.   | Learns from mistakes               | 5,93 | 1,267          |
| 2.   | Ambitious                          | 5,84 | 1,322          |
| 3.   | Success oriented                   | 5,79 | 1,258          |
| 4.   | Always improving skills            | 5,75 | 1,211          |
| 5.   | Considers „the big picture“        | 5,74 | 1,244          |
| 6.   | Moral                              | 5,67 | 1,241          |
| 7.   | Competent                          | 5,64 | 1,173          |
| 8.   | Competitive                        | 5,55 | 1,367          |
| 9.   | Positive attitude                  | 5,54 | 1,552          |
| 10.  | Knows how to motivate others       | 5,51 | 1,253          |

*Source: Authors' research*

When examining the top ten leadership characteristics of the sample, one immediately notices that student related characteristics are strongly represented. Being students, seeking to increase their knowledge and obtain career enhancing skills, it is to be expected that they learn from their mistakes, are ambitious and success oriented, and are looking to improve their skills. While acquiring skill sets and knowledge, this sample has a strong psychological make-up that should increase their chances of success, being moral, competent and competitive while possessing a positive attitude. Finally, the sample is showing signs of looking beyond themselves and considering how they will fit in with their environment, stating that they know how to motivate others.

Generation/year based differentiation of Leadership characteristics of RIT Croatia students as applied to the 42 leadership characteristics are found in Table 3, showing that seniors are significantly different than first, second and third year students in that they do not mind it when their decisions are questioned (Does not like it when decisions are questioned by others - Does not mind when decisions are questioned by others pairing). Seniors are significantly different than other students in two other characteristics. First, seniors report themselves as being more competent than do other students (Incompetent – Competent pairing). And second, seniors view themselves as more proactive than do other students (Inert – Proactive pairing).

Table 3

Generation/year based differentiation of leadership characteristics of RIT Croatia students

| Leadership characteristics                            | CC   | Asy. Sig. | p-val | df | Freshmen | Sophomores | Juniors | Seniors | SUM  |
|---|------|-----------|-------|----|----------|------------|---------|---------|------|
| Does not mind when decisions are questioned by others | .517 | .010      | .021  | 18 | 30%      | 27%        | 8%      | 34%     | 100% |
| Competent   | .006 | .007      | .006  | 15 | 30%      | 27%        | 8%      | 34%     | 100% |
| Proactive   | .493 | .039      | .006  | 18 | 30%      | 27%        | 8%      | 34%     | 100% |

Source: Authors' research

Gender based differentiation of leadership characteristics of RIT Croatia students is shown in Table 4, revealing female students to be more focused, proactive, influential and willing to admit mistakes at a statistically significant level.

Table 4

Gender based differentiation of leadership characteristics of RIT Croatia students

| Leadership characteristic | CC   | Asymp.Sig.  | p-val. | Df | Female | Male  | Sum  |
|---------------------------|------|-------------|--------|----|--------|-------|------|
| Focused                   | .363 | <b>.013</b> | .001   | 6  | 50.5%  | 49.5% | 100% |
| Proactive                 | .351 | <b>.042</b> | .023   | 6  | 50.5%  | 49.5% | 100% |
| Influential               | .332 | <b>.038</b> | .022   | 5  | 50.5%  | 49.5% | 100% |
| Admits mistake            | .327 | <b>.044</b> | .015   | 5  | 50.5%  | 49.5% | 100% |

Source: Author's research

### 3.2.2. RIT Croatia Leadership Characteristics Cluster Analysis

The basis for the second cluster analysis was leadership characteristics of RIT Croatia students (Table 5).

Table 5

RIT Croatia Leadership characteristics cluster analysis

| Variables           |               | Cluster                 |                          |                |
|---------------------|---------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|
|                     |               | 1. Prime future leaders | 2.Optimal future leaders | 3. Non leaders |
| Opposing adjectives |               | Scale 1 2 3 4 5 6 7     |                          |                |
| Immoral             | Moral         | 6                       | 5                        | 3              |
| Unscrupulous        | Conscientious | 6                       | 5                        | 3              |
| Quitter             | Persistent    | 6                       | 5                        | 3              |

|  |   |            |            |           |
|--|---|------------|------------|-----------|
| Inconsistent   | Consistent  | 6          | 5          | 3         |
| No luck  | Lucky   | 5          | 4          | 3         |
| Unfocused  | Focused   | 6          | 4          | 4         |
| Negative attitude  | Positive attitude                                     | 6          | 5          | 2         |
| Talentless   | Talented  | 6          | 5          | 2         |
| Uncompetitive  | Competitive   | 6          | 5          | 3         |
| Inert  | Proactive   | 6          | 5          | 3         |
| Has no eye for business opportunities                    | Has an eye for business opportunities                 | 6          | 5          | 3         |
| Incompetent  | Competent   | 6          | 5          | 3         |
| No empathy   | Full of empathy                                       | 5          | 5          | 3         |
| Not success oriented                                     | Success oriented                                      | 6          | 5          | 3         |
| Unambitious  | Ambitious   | 6          | 5          | 3         |
| Risk-averse  | Risk-taking   | 6          | 5          | 3         |
| Insincere  | Sincere   | 6          | 5          | 3         |
| Suspicious   | Trusting  | 5          | 4          | 3         |
| Non influential  | Influential   | 5          | 5          | 3         |
| Does not know how to motivate others                     | Knows how to motivate others                          | 6          | 5          | 4         |
| Non-genuine  | Authentic   | 6          | 5          | 3         |
| Non inventive  | Innovative  | 6          | 5          | 3         |
| Willing to have a monologue                              | Willing to have a dialogue                            | 5          | 4          | 3         |
| Does not admit mistakes                                  | Admits mistake  | 6          | 5          | 3         |
| Does not like it when decisions are questioned by others | Does not mind when decisions are questioned by others | 5          | 4          | 3         |
| Unprincipled   | Principled  | 6          | 5          | 2         |
| Not improving skills                                     | Always improving skills                               | 6          | 5          | 4         |
| Doesn't track competitors' actions                       | Tracks competitors' actions                           | 6          | 4          | 3         |
| Non-profit oriented                                      | Profit oriented                                       | 6          | 5          | 3         |
| Unintuitive  | Intuitive   | 6          | 5          | 3         |
| Does not learn from mistakes                             | Learns from mistakes                                  | 6          | 5          | 4         |
| Does not consider „the big picture“                      | Considers „the big picture“                           | 6          | 5          | 3         |
| Lazy   | Hard-working  | 6          | 4          | 2         |
| Not concerned about social inequality                    | Concerned about social inequality                     | 6          | 4          | 4         |
| Physically aggressive                                    | Physically non-aggressive                             | 6          | 5          | 3         |
| Not physically active                                    | Physically active                                     | 6          | 5          | 4         |
| Does not plan strategically                              | Plans strategically                                   | 6          | 5          | 2         |
| Improvises   | Plans short-term                                      | 4          | 3          | 3         |
| <b>SUM</b>   | <b>% of participants</b>                              | <b>63%</b> | <b>36%</b> | <b>4%</b> |

Source: Author's research

When considering the presence of Samardžija's (2013) leadership characteristics among the sample, cluster analysis reveals three distinct clusters based on 38 leadership characteristics. Encouragingly, the first cluster, Prime Future Leaders, those respondents who most strongly report to possess leadership characteristics, are the largest group, making up 63% of the sample. Impressively, this cluster has a score of six (on a 7-point Likert scale) on 31 of 38 (81.6%) of the relevant characteristics. The remaining seven characteristics have six scores of five and one four (on a 7-point Likert scale) on the improvising as opposed to planning characteristic. But this score, in and of itself, should not be seen as a negative for the cluster as the decision making process is contextual in that those situations that are uncertain or highly uncertain require more improvising than more certain situations that can be addressed through a more structured approach (Sarasvathy, 2008). Across the board, then, these individuals, based on Samardžija's (2013) work, are well positioned to become leaders. They are willing to take risks, are dedicated and hard-working, want and seek to improve themselves, and are emotionally intelligent.

The second cluster, Optimal Future Leaders, is also well represented, comprising 36% of the sample. These individuals largely score one point less (on a 7-point Likert scale) on the leadership characteristics than the Prime Future Leaders, and are thus also well positioned to become leaders. Note that for no single characteristic does this cluster rate itself higher than the Prime Future Leaders do, and only equates itself with the Prime Future Leaders in two characteristics: full of empathy and influential. Additionally, the largest differences (a score of two on a 7-point Likert scale) between this cluster and the Prime Future Leaders are found in four characteristics: focused versus not focused; tracks the competitions' actions versus not doing so; hard-working versus lazy; and concerned about social equity versus not being so. These four differences are indicative of the Prime Future Leaders relative advanced position. Being more focused and hard-working, the Prime Future leaders have a greater level of drive and determination as reflected in their higher scoring in the other characteristics. And this edge further operationalizes itself in that Prime Future Leaders are more aware of their surroundings both in terms of what competitors are doing as well as the overall general welfare of society.

The third cluster, Non-leaders, only make up 4% of the sample. This group exhibits markedly unimpressive leadership characteristics with their highest score being four (on a 7-point Likert scale) and this occurs in just six characteristics: knows how to motivate others; always improving skills; learns from mistakes; physically active; concerned about social inequality; and focused. And in these last two characteristics, Non-leaders, in their best showing against the other two clusters, match the scores of the Optimal Future Leaders but not the Prime Future Leaders. It is instructive to recognize that the Non-leaders do not outscore the other two clusters in any characteristic. As for the other 32 leadership characteristics, Non-leaders recorded scores of three with the exception of five characteristics that have a score of two: positive attitude; talented; principled; hard-working; and plans strategically. These five poorly scored characteristics aptly capture the overall poor scoring of this cluster. As they are not

hard-working, lack talent, positive attitudes, and principles, the scores in the other characteristics are not surprising. They do not have great potential to become leaders.

### 3.3. What Represents Confirmation of Personal Success?

The majority of students, 57%, choose success to be defined as: Success is when one does what one loves, goes to work happy with a smile on one's face, and is able to maintain a balance between satisfying one's own needs, family needs, and health and societal needs.

Additionally we have conducted the third cluster analysis which depended on what represents confirmation of personal success (Table 6).

Cluster analysis of student ranking of components that they see as confirmation of success generated three homogeneous clusters: Moderates, Capitalists and Sociocapitalists. The first cluster, Moderates, comprise 33.6% of the sample and are, as their name suggests, moderate in their expectations of success. They consider the amount of money they make to be important, but only to the extent that this wealth will allow them to have good health and provide a college education for their children. Material goods such as homes and cars are not important to them nor is media recognition. Likewise, they have little interest in influencing public policy and they do not express an interest in leaving their mark of society, making the world a better place overall. The level of employee satisfaction, however, is one externally oriented (viewable to the world) characteristic that is moderately important to this cluster.

Table 6

RIT Croatia Leadership characteristics cluster analysis

| VARIABLE/question content   | Cluster 1<br>MODERATES | Cluster 2<br>CAPITALIST | Cluster 3<br>SOCIO-<br>CAPITALIST |
|---|------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Confirmation of my personal success is:                             | Not important          | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7           | Very important                    |
| The amount of money that I have earned                              | 5                      | 6                       | 4                                 |
| Recognition by high society   | 4                      | 6                       | 3                                 |
| A satisfied team of employees                                       | 5                      | 6                       | 6                                 |
| Being part of government policy formation                           | 3                      | 5                       | 2                                 |
| The number of cars that I have                                      | 2                      | 4                       | 1                                 |
| Having good health  | 6                      | 7                       | 7                                 |
| Being able to actively play and engage in sports                    | 4                      | 6                       | 6                                 |
| Leaving a positive mark on society; making the world a better place | 4                      | 6                       | 6                                 |
| Enabling my children to obtain a college level of education         | 6                      | 7                       | 6                                 |
| <b>SUM of respondents n=122</b>                                     | <b>41</b>              | <b>42</b>               | <b>39</b>                         |
| Percentages   | <b>33.6 %</b>          | <b>34.4%</b>            | <b>32%</b>                        |

Source: Author's research

Capitalists, the second cluster, make up 34.4% of the sample. Much like the Moderates, this cluster views money earned as confirmation of their success, using income to ensure good health and college educations for their children, but, unlike Moderates, they seek external validation of their success as exhibited by their desire to be recognized by high-society, mentioned in media, involved in public policy formation, and recognized for having satisfied employees. Moreover, more than the other two clusters, they view possession of material goods as confirmation of their success, rating the amount of real estate they own as somewhat important. Lastly, perhaps as an expression of their wealth and general level of success, this cluster wishes to actively engage in sports, signalling to the world that they are well-rounded individuals.

The third cluster, Socio-capitalists, represent 32% of the sample. This cluster is distinct from the other two in that it exhibits a clear lack of interest in any real material or worldly recognition or display of their success. As such, this cluster is not interested in owning properties and cars (giving these item the lowest possible score), and does not wish to be acknowledged by high-society, mentioned in media, or associated with government policy formation. Furthermore, this cluster shows indifference towards the amount of money, scoring four on a 7-point Likert scale in this characteristic. What does matter to this cluster in terms of success is to be noticed for positively contributing to society, wishing to be credited with leaving a positive mark on society as well as having satisfied employees. Like the other two clusters, Socio-capitalists want to have good health and the ability to provide their children with a college education.

### **3.4. Subjective Dimension of Career Development Expectation**

The final, fourth, cluster analysis was based on the subjective dimension of career development expectation. Based on cluster analysis of student ranking of components they see important for their career development, three homogeneous groups were identified: Careerists, Certaintists and Balanceists (Table 7).

Careerists, the first cluster, at 61.2%, is the largest cluster. As its name suggests, this cluster shows the strongest interest in pursuing a career as well as being recognized for it. Of the seventeen items in this cluster, Careerists have a score of six (on a 7-point Likert scale) on fourteen items, one score of five and two scores of seven. Notably, the other two clusters do not score higher on any of the seventeen items. Careerists express a strong desire to be able to grow within an organization, build or create something within a firm, and maintain autonomy at the same time. And these Careerists want affirmation of their accomplishments in the form of money as well as social standing.

Table 7

Cluster analysis of student ranking of components that they see important for their career development

| VARIABLE/question content  | Cluster 1<br>CAREERISTS                           | Cluster 2<br>CERTAINTISTS | Cluster 3<br>BALANCEISTS |
|--|---|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>For development of my career, it is important:</b>  | <b>Not important 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very important</b> |                           |                          |
| To be (stay) in a company older and more experienced than myself   | 5   | 4                         | 4                        |
| That my superior gives me a chance for self-affirmation and that he believes in me   | 6   | 4                         | 6                        |
| That I specialize and develop in my field of expertise   | 6   | 4                         | 5                        |
| That I have a clear wish to climb the corporate ladder   | 6   | 4                         | 5                        |
| To have an opportunity to create a new entity (organization) as well as to develop new products or services  | 6   | 4                         | 5                        |
| That I have autonomy and independence – I can work my way at my pace, according to my personal standards and conditions and within my personally defined time frames | 6   | 4                         | 6                        |
| That I have a sense of safeness/stability – that I feel safe and financially secure  | 6   | 4                         | 6                        |
| That I integrate my professional life and career with my personal life and future family needs – life balance matters  | 6   | 3                         | 6                        |
| That I make the world a better place, improving and serving society  | 6   | 3                         | 5                        |
| That I overcome impossible obstacles; that I solve unsolvable problems or achieve victory over strong competition  | 6   | 3                         | 5                        |
| That I love my job and profession  | 7   | 4                         | 7                        |
| That I use all of my special talents   | 6   | 4                         | 6                        |
| That my job gives me an opportunity to be financially well-off   | 7   | 4                         | 6                        |
| That my job provides me with high social status and prestige   | 6   | 4                         | 4                        |
| That my job gives me numerous opportunities to work with people  | 6   | 4                         | 5                        |
| That my job gives me the option to lead and manage others  | 6   | 3                         | 5                        |
| <b>SUM of respondents n=116</b>  | <b>71</b>   | <b>12</b>                 | <b>33</b>                |
|  | <b>61.2%</b>                                      | <b>10.4%</b>              | <b>28.4%</b>             |

Source: Author's research

Despite seeking great advancement in their careers, this cluster also strives to maintain a certain balance with their surroundings: they desire safety, a balance between work and family, and the chance to improve society. To be given the chance to face challenging situations, to be able to triumph, to be rewarded for their efforts, and to be able to do so while maintaining balance in their lives while helping society: these are the characteristics of the Careerists.

The second clusters, Certainists, the smallest group, account for only 10.4% of the sample. This group is starkly different than the other two clusters in this analysis, recording a high score of four (on a 7-point Likert scale) on any of the seventeen items describing this cluster analysis. In fact, Certainists have a score of four on thirteen of the items and three on the other four items. They are strictly 'in the middle of the road'. None of the seventeen items excites them one way or the other. They express no wish to excel in terms of developing themselves in a field of interest, receiving status of any type, or excelling. This cluster, apparently, has yet to determine what they want in terms of career development. They have yet to find their way.

The final cluster, Balanceists, comprise 28.4% of the sample. This cluster largely mirrors the Careerists, but with less conviction. Accordingly, for the most part, this cluster either matches the Careerists' scores on the seventeen items or scores one point less. Thusly, Balanceists too seek the opportunity to grow and excel in their careers, face challenges and overcome them, and be acknowledged for their efforts and successes. The strongest difference between Balanceists and Careerists is found in the receipt of social status and prestige item, scoring two points less. This cluster, then, values and seeks the same things as do the Careerists, only slightly less so.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Using cluster analysis, this research empirically describes four different approaches of viewing aspects related to leadership of a college student sample in a transition economy, each approach uncovering three clusters: using The Big Five Model of Personality (Emotional-extrovert, Self-satisfactionist, and Creative-perfectionist clusters); based on Samardžija's (2013) inductively determined leadership characteristics of transition economy leaders (Prime Future Leader, Optimal Leader, and Non-leader clusters); what represents confirmation of personal success (Moderate, Capitalist, and Socio-capitalist clusters); and components that students deem important for their career development (Careerist, Certainist, and Balanceist).

This paper's null hypothesis, that there is not a correlation between leadership characteristics among an undergraduate population and two demographic variables - number of siblings and place of growing up (city, small place, and large city), was accepted. There was, however, a significant difference



between students who changed their place of residence in comparison to those who continued to reside in their place of birth.

The majority of students, 57%, choose success to be defined as: Success is when one does what one loves, goes to work happy with a smile on one's face, and is able to maintain a balance between satisfying one's own needs, family needs, and health and societal needs.

Interestingly, students show a clear preference for a certain cluster in three of the four analyses, with the exception being the analysis pertaining to personal success having an almost equal distribution of its three clusters. In the other three cluster analyses, the largest cluster, at a minimum, represents 61.2% of the sample, suggesting a level of homogeneity among the student population. Additionally, in these three analyses, the second largest clusters make-up 23.5% to 32%, leaving the third and final cluster ranging from 4% to 12.6%.

When looking at the largest clusters in the aforementioned three cluster analyses, one senses that students, using Samardžija's (2013) inductively identified leadership characteristics found in a transition economy and the Big Five Personality traits, are well positioned and prepared to become leaders.

First, based on the Big Five Personality traits, students are Creative Perfectionists, being interested in an array of interests that they engage in an organized and relatively imaginative fashion. Moreover, they are to the point. Their responses suggest that they have limited tolerance for some while, at the same time, are sympathetic to others. This dichotomous attitude may serve them well as they navigate uncertain waters in a transition economy, allowing them to harbour their limited resources on only the most promising paths.

Second, according to Samardžija's (2013) transition economy work, this student sample is primarily Prime Future Leaders. As such, they are risk-takers and innovative while considering the big picture, positive and proactive, competitive and ambitious, and talented and persistent. At the same time, they are willing to admit to mistakes and learn from them, and to have dialogues. And they interact with the world in an authentic and empathetic fashion. In sum, they embody characteristics empirically shown to allow for success in an uncertain transition economy (Samardžija, 2013).

Third, when considering elements critical for career success, the student sample is found to act as Careerists. Careerists are critical to the success of transition economies in that they provide two direct benefits to the economy. In the first sense, these Careerists are interested in success. They want to both make money, strengthening the economy, as well as leaving a positive mark on their societies, making them countries a better place. In the second sense, they seek social recognition of their success in the form of recognition by society and prestige. This active and visible recognition increases the overall social acceptance of successful business people. Social norms, then, are altered to

support and encourage their activities. These altered social norms can lead to increased levels of similar activity of others (Walker, Jeger, & Kopecki, 2013).

The fourth cluster analysis, pertaining to confirmation of personal success, as previously mentioned, produced an almost equal distribution of clusters. All three of these clusters are in relative agreement in three areas: the desire to have a satisfied team, good health, and the ability to provide their children with a college education. But in other areas, students are indecisive. It would seem, then, that students have yet to determine how they wish to express and use their success.

Additional analyses were conducted on the sample as a whole, looking for the most prevalent leadership characteristics, as well as generational and gender differences. Predictably, the sample possesses leadership characteristics that one would expect to find in college students: ambitious, success oriented, competitive and competent. From a gender standpoint, females were found to be more focused, proactive, influential, and willing to make mistakes. When considering generational differences, seniors, potentially resulting from their greater schooling and experience, find themselves to be more competent, proactive, and willing to accept criticism of their decisions.

It would appear, based on this sample's responses, that the design of the curriculum and accompanying extra-curricular activities has achieved one of R.I.T.'s stated objectives, as previously mentioned, of creating desired leadership competencies that will make students valuable future managers / leaders. R.I.T.'s founding principle of providing students with a blended education set that provides a theoretical framework paired with practical applications, according to this study, has convincingly produced leadership minded individuals.

#### *Limitations and future research*

Note that various constraints limited this research to a single private college, limiting the research in two ways. First, the sample size could have been larger. And, second, public universities were not included, potentially creating a sample that was not fully representative of Croatia's predominately public higher education institutions. As such, this research should be expanded to include a number of public entities as well as additional private schools. If, in fact, this study's sample is found to be in the minority of all (the country's) higher education students, then their potential positive impacts may be muted or washed out by the larger group of other students.

It would be interesting to learn how these positively positioned future leaders develop over time as they immerse themselves in their careers. Do they build upon their existing leadership foundations, or do they for some reason or another falter, becoming less leadership oriented?

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**STUDENTSKO VODSTVO, RAZVOJ KARIJERE I  
PROFILI OSOBNOG USPJEHA*****Sažetak***

Glavni cilj ovog empirijskog istraživanja bio je utvrditi prevladavajuće osobine vođe i ponašanja kod sve četiri generacije studenata preddiplomskog studija na američkom koledžu RIT Croatia u Dubrovniku. Osnovno istraživačko pitanje bilo je: „Koja je empirijska osnova za razvrstavanje učenika u homogene skupine?“ Prvi dio upitnika temelji se na značajkama Big Five modela osobnosti, ali glavna metoda istraživanja bio je upitnik za istraživanje osobina vođe, razvoja karijere i osobnog uspjeha, sastavljen primjenom induktivnih metodologija istraživanja na 100 intervjuja hrvatskih vođa. Da bismo odgovorili na postavljeno istraživačko pitanje, provedene su četiri klaster analize. Nulta hipoteza da nema povezanosti između osobina vođe među studentima preddiplomskog studija i demografskih varijabli (broj braće i sestara, mjesto odrastanja - grad, malo mjesto i veliki grad) potvrđena je. Temeljeći se na Big Five modelu osobnosti, prva klaster analiza pokazala je tri homogene skupine studenata. Osnova za drugu analizu klastera bila je osobine vođe studenata RIT Croatia. Treća klaster analiza ovisila je o tome što predstavlja potvrdu osobnog uspjeha. Konačna, četvrta klaster analiza temeljila se na subjektivnoj dimenziji očekivanja razvoja karijere. Sve četiri klaster analize rezultirale su trima različitim klasterima.

***Ključne riječi: osobine vođe, razvoj studenata, profil studentskog vodstva, razvoj karijere, osobni uspjeh.***

***JEL klasifikacija: M12***



